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AUTHOR Goodman, Jesse
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ABSTRACT

A three-part program in elementary teacher education was initiated as an experimental and alternative approach to a traditional teacher education program, and students and faculty members in this elementary education program (EEP) were observed and interviewed during two university quarters (six months). The EEP was organized around three interrelated components: (1) a seminar, or small discussion group, for students to share problems and build a personal educational belief system; (2) study of content, composed of methods and curriculum courses; and (3) field experiences. The seminar was referred to as "the heart of the program," as it reflected many of the program's humanist philosophies. The seminar offered an informal learning environment or home base from which students' personal and professional growth was fostered through reflection and dialogue. "There is no one 'right' way to teach" was a slogan often expressed in opposition to traditional approaches to and philosophies of education. Several portions of various interviews are transcribed to show students', seminar leaders', and teacher educators' reactions to the seminar, courses, and field experiences. Several conclusions are made about the effectiveness of the EEP and its role in the preparation of teachers. A list of 54 references is included along with three appendices on the topics of the role of the EEP seminar leader, recommended seminar activities, and a statement on disciplinary actions taken against school children. (FG)

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The Role of the University:

The Seminar Experience in a Humanistic Teacher Education Program

Jesse Goodman

University of Wisconsin-Madison

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University seminars or discussion groups that were formed in conjunction with field-based student-teaching have been fairly common since shortly after World War II in the United States (see Stratemeyer 1956). While student-teaching in the public schools has come under close scrutiny and has been the topic of several articles, there has been relatively little literature devoted to the seminar's role in pre-service teacher education. From the limited discussion that does exist, seminars have generally been described as places where students can: interact in an informal environment that is conducive for creative problem solving, relate educational theory to practice, develop insight into themselves and their student-teaching experiences, and thus grow personally and professionally (see Sarason et. al. 1962, Combs et. al. 1978, Zeichner 1981a, Feiman 1979). In spite of this discussion and the seminar's popularity, there are few research studies that directly explore these experiences. As a result, there is a lack of comprehensive knowledge on whether this description accurately reflects the reality of the seminar experience. In at least one study, the findings showed that while the objectives of the seminar were similar to the above description, these goals were not acted upon in the seminar meetings (see Tabachnick et. al. 1980). What happens in these group meetings? What activities transpire? What is discussed? What principles guide this experience and how are these principles manifested? Underlying these questions is the issue of: what role does the university play in pre-service teacher education? In discussing these questions, this paper presents the findings of a study that portrays and illuminates the reality of the seminar experience in an elementary teacher education program, and analyzes the role it played in the education of pre-service

student-teachers (see MacDonald 1976, Parlett and Hamilton 1972). After a brief outline of the study's methods, this report is divided into three sections. The first two portray the ways in which the seminar's principles were manifested. Section one focuses on how the structure and some of the activities of this experience were in accordance with these principles. The second explores how these principles were interpreted by most students and seminar leaders; thus creating a very different reality from the one described in the first section. Finally, the role of the university in teacher education is analyzed in light of the study's findings.

Methodology and Sample Selection

The theoretical perspective of this study's methodology comes from the phenomenological tradition within social science (see Luckman 1978). Specifically it draws from the principles of symbolic interactionism as a guide for understanding and illuminating social life (see Blumer 1969, Mead 1934). Its basic premise is that social reality is understood from exploring the interaction between the external environment and one's internal processing of and action upon that environment. In this sense, wo/man is seen as an active, rather than passive, agent in the creation of his/her social life. The methods used were those associated with field studies, i.e. participant observation (see Glaser and Strauss 1975, Lutz and Iannaccone 1969, Bruyn 1966). Observations and interviews (both formal and informal) were the two main methods of data collection. In addition, the program's literature concerning the seminar experience was reviewed, e.g. student handbook, seminar leader's guidebook, weekly newsletter, etc. Information was recorded in field notes during a six-month period (two university quarters).[1]

The sample was located in the Elementary Education Program (EEP) at State U., a large southeastern university. This program was divided into two teams each containing four or five seminar groups. Each seminar was composed of a leader (either a professor or graduate teaching assistant) and 20-30 randomally assigned students. Each of Dr. Franks, (all names are fictitious) a professor and seminar leader in Team I, weekly seminar meetings were observed along with many of his conferences with individual students. The other four seminars in Team I were also observed once or more during the field work. Because some students elected not to participate in the study, approximately 85% of Dr. Franks' students were interviewed on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. In addition, other students and seminar leaders in both Teams I and II were interviewed regarding their perceptions of, reactions to, and attitudes toward this experience. Three group interviews were held with Dr. Franks' seminar, and one interview was held with a special seminar in Team II comprised only of graduating seniors. Much of this interviewing was conducted using Glaser and Strauss' (1975) notions of "theoretical sampling" and "constant comparative method" of analysis.

The Seminar: Its Principles Actualized

The EEP was organized around three interrelated components.

> Each quarter the professional studies will comprise participation in a) seminar - a small discussion group which gives continuity and direction to the program by providing students with a place to share their meanings and problems in interaction with their peers while building a personal educational belief

system: b) study of content - (methods/curriculum courses and foundation courses in education); and c) field experience - placement in a local public or private school classroom. (State U. Undergraduate Catalog)

The seminar was described by many faculty members as the most likely place where students could reflect upon and integrate the ideas and experiences found in the other two components of the program, and thus come to a deeper understanding of their education and the education of children. Students were assigned to a seminar upon entering the program and remained in that group for the duration of their education. Each quarter some members graduated, and new students replaced them. At the beginning of each quarter, the seminar broke up into two groups. Each group met once per week for a ninety minute session. In addition to the weekly meetings, students met individually with their seminar leaders at the beginning and end of each quarter to plan out their academic schedules, reflect upon their experiences, and/or raise any problems they might be facing. Conferences also occured during the quarter to discuss either personal or professional concerns that might spontaneously arise. These conferences were also considered part of the seminar experience. Because of this contact, many faculty viewed the seminar as the avenue by which the university could have a significant influence upon the students' professional development.

The principles upon which the seminar was organized were developed during the initial stages of the EEP. This program was founded as an experimental and alternative approach to teacher education. Unlike

many programs in the United States that developed without any well-defined theoretical perspective, or those that emerged with a behavioral approach (see Joyce et. al. 1977, Elam 1971), the EEP evolved from humanistic principles concerning teaching and learning. The founders of the program mentioned such books as: The Professional Education of Teachers (Combs 1965), The Preparation of Teachers-An Unstudied Problem in Education (Sarason et. al. 1962), Humanistic Teacher Education: An Experiment in Systematic Curriculum Innovation (Wass et. al. 1974), and the writings of Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and other humanistic educators as the inspiration of their early efforts. The seminar was referred to as the "heart of the program," and it ideally reflected many of the program's central philosophies. The student handbook gave nine principles that guided the formation and activities of the seminar experience.

1. A home base for students
2. A small community of persons seeking to learn and to help each other learn.
3. Primary purpose: to help each student discover his own personal meanings through exploration of self as well as ideas and experiences he has been exposed to.
4. Consists of students at various stages of their development, which makes it possible for "Older" students to help "Younger" ones.

5. Professors learn about the "real world" of today's classroom and about students' reactions to it.
6. Provides an atmosphere of interest and concern for each member of the group- giving him the emotional support he needs to risk thinking about new ideas.
7. No set curriculum- discussions might focus on: field experiences, teachers' unions, communications theory, values clarification, reports from team meetings, and social activities.
8. Seminar leader is also advisor, counselor, record keeper, evaluator . . . Hopefully, relationships with students are friendly and open.
9. Informality is important. Meetings are often held in homes, apartments, as well as classrooms. (Team I Student Handbook)

Two interrelated themes tended to emerge from the principles mentioned in the student handbook: 1) the development of a 'learning environment" (home base) and 2) the personal and professional growth of students through reflection and dialogue.

These themes were manifested in a number of ways. Unlike traditional courses which maintained a formal structure and were

organized around a specific curriculum, it was believed that students and/or leaders could bring enough "content" for examination in seminar meetings from their other courses, field experiences, readings, and/or personal backgrounds. Therefore, the structural goal of the seminar leader was to develop a "home base," an atmosphere in which students could feel comfortable sharing both their knowledge and ignorance as their education continued.

To help students "open up," informality was stressed. Meeting in students' apartments and having social events such as pot-luck dinners, snacks at meetings, and end-of-quarter parties as part of the seminar experience were expected to help students feel more relaxed and thus facilitate communication. Having students remain in the same seminar each quarter was designed to promote friendships and raise the level of trust within the group.

The feelings of camaraderie seemed genuine for many students and faculty members. A number of seminar leaders and students were on a first-name basis. When asked what they learned from their seminar experience, many students mentioned their increased ability to assert and express themselves. For some, the feelings of group cohesion lasted beyond graduation. During the fall quarter, two former students sent letters to Dr. Franks' seminar informing them of their present teaching position and asking about the seminar's welfare.

Along with this informality, there was an attempt to reduce the top-down hierarchy found in traditional educational settings. Seminar leaders often gave their opinions on the various topics brought up

in discussions, but they were not spoken or received as educational "gospel." A few seminar leaders tried to minimize their role as authority figures by being open to student criticism. During Dr. Franks' end-of-quarter conferences with his students, a number of criticisms were expressed concerning the value, purpose, and activities of the seminar meetings. Instead of being defensive, he made a sincere effort to help students express their concerns and to understand them (observation of end-of-quarter conferences with Dr. Franks 12/79). At the first meeting of the next quarter, he once again raised the criticisms mentioned in the conferences and facilitated a discussion in which grievances were expressed. Students did not dictate what would happen in the meetings, but Dr. Franks was open to negotiation.

> A number of students wanted more structure in the meetings. They proposed that each week there be a specific topic to be discussed that would be decided upon at least one week prior to the given meeting. Dr. Franks cautioned against this because he felt the discussions might lose some of their spontaneity. A compromise was reached. Each week there would be a designated topic, but the seminar was not bound to it if something more important arose. (observation and summary of seminar 1/30)

A number of the seminar leaders took their role as counselor very seriously and became involved in their students' personal as well as professional lives, as one often had a direct bearing on the other.

She (a student) has been in the program for eight quarters now and had only completed twenty-five percent of her learning activities (course assignments). At the end of the summer I wrote her a letter informing her that she was in danger of being dropped from the program. Apparently she didn't get it because when she came into my office today, she came across it, and got very upset. She started crying and said, 'Just tell me how long I have before I have to die?' I told her I wanted to keep things flexible, but that she would really have to start going and get through this material, or I would have no choice; I'd have to ask her to leave. She became angry and said she was afraid of me and that I was judging her unfa ly. She said that unlike other students who 'jive' their way through the program, she was working hard and doing a good job in the schools. This was true. We talked some more and I got some insight into her problem. What happens is that when her assignments are returned, unaccepted, she gets discouraged by the failure and doesn't re-submit them. Her mother always told her that she would never amount to anything and so here she is- caught in the predicament of wanting to succeed and being afraid of failure. What happens is she sits down to do her assignments and all of the fear that she won't get it done and the messages that

> she is 'no good' make it impossible for her to think clearly enough to accomplish her activities. We finally agreed not to make any decision immediately, but see what happens this quarter. We agreed to meet every other week to see if that will help her develop a plan for getting this work done. (He was asked if he often got this involved with his students.) Some of them. Most students need someone to talk to, and I like the contact. (interview with Dr. Franks, 10/79)

Seminar leaders were observed putting extra time into helping students with problems either in their practicum sites or in their personal lives.[2] A few seminar leaders mentioned that they hoped students would subtly recognize the importance in developing this type of learning environment with children, and integrate its values and characteristics into their teaching.

It should be remembered that ideally this environment was not developed for its own sake. Its rationale was strongly tied to the seminar's main purpose of promoting the growth of students.

> The problem (of developing a learning environment) is more complex than just making friends with students. That's relatively easy, but it's not enough. You also have to challenge students to think about who they are and what they're doing in the classroom. It's also easy to point out

> "unhealthy" attitudes or misperceptions to students, but if you don't have their trust, those "insights" don't get very far. The probelm is how does one gain the students' trust (and the influence that it brings), and at the same time challenge students to go beyond their everyday, taken-for-granted experiences and perceptions. There is a big difference between challenging a student in a way that leads to further insight versus defensiveness. The trick is to be both challenging and supportive because both are essential, but it isn't easy. (interview with Dr. Mentzer 2/80)

Developing a "home base" ideally allowed members to dispute issues, ideas, beliefs, and perceptions without becoming withdrawn.

The growth theme reflected the program's belief that good teaching was largely a reflection of an individual's psychological health and not a question of practic "right" methods. This concept was not neutral. All individuals "grow," but not always in a healthy direction. "Good" teachers (students) were described as having healthy perceptions of other people. They were empathic and sensitive to those around them, they trusted children's curiosity and rebelliousness instead of feeling threatened by it, they were concerned with the ethical dimensions of behavior, and they responded creatively to the institutional constraints placed upon them in classrooms instead of merely conforming to the status quo. Good teaching was partly

seen as the result of an individual discovering his/her own uniqueness as a potentially creative human being, and then using this uniqueness in their teaching. These ideas were closely related to the self-actualization theories of Carl Rogers (1961) and Abraham Maslow (1971). (interviews with Dr. Franks, Dr. Mentzer, and Dr. Ryan 9/79-3/80)

Student growth was encouraged in two ways: 1) through "human relations" activities and 2) through reflection and dialogue. Dr. Franks would usually start his seminar meetings with a "centering" or meditation exercise. Values clarification, active listening, feedback, and other activities were a common occurence in seminar meetings.

> I think a lot of students want to be more humanistic, but when they get out into the schools and are confronted with an entire system that says, "Control those kids!" they fall back on the way they were disciplined in schools, or the way other teachers discipline. I think T.E.T. (Teacher Effectiveness Training, see Gordon 1974) gives the ones who are inclined towards humanism some concrete tools to implement their beliefs. (interview with Dr. Franks 9/79)

The Team I Seminar Guidebook offered a wide variety of exercises such as "Quartet Encounters," "Public Interview," and "Fantasy Trip" (see appendix B) as possible activities to help students become more introspective and aware of others.

Along with having students reflect upon themselves as people and teachers, students were also asked to reflect upon the nature of

children, issues of education, and/or the school/classroom environment. At times there were overt efforts to foster peer interaction to facilitate this inquiry.

> Dr. Franks than said, "I want to ask the Intensives (students in their final teaching experience) if they would share some insights they've gotten this quarter." Tom responded first by telling the others that he really "felt like a teacher now," and how important it was for him to start at the beginning of the school year instead of waiting until the university quarter began. He shared the value of being part of the team planning that decided the ability groups at the beginning of the year. Kate, another Intensive, commented on this and asked, "Don't you just hate the way the kids get on each other for being in one group versus another?" A discussion on the value of ability grouping commenced with some students suggesting this organization promoted a lot of stigmatizing, which hinders children's learning, and others pointing out its efficiency in dealing with the diversity of skill levels found in their classrooms. (observation and summary of seminar 10/79)

In discussing these issues, the emphasis on peer learning was based on the belief that education should involve more than just filling

the empty heads of passive students. Hopefully, students would come to realize that they have much to contribute and have the power to create knowledge about education and its practice.

As students read books and articles, listened to lectures, participated in discussions, and practice taught, they engaged in self communicaiton. Through this inner dialogue they made sense of and gave meaning to their education. In this way they learned primarily from their own, subjective experience. Seminars tried to penetrate this internal dialogue, and use it as a means for students to explore their evolving attitudes, values, ideas, and/or behavior. Seminars were suppose to link one's personal growth to the problems of teaching and learning.

> Dr. Young began the meeting by asking students to share any concerns or problems they had encountered in their field placements. One student mentioned the difficulty she was having that centered on a child labelled EMR. Students were then asked to think about children who get "picked on" (one of the problems the student had mentioned) and what role should a teacher play in this type of situation. She asked them to think about why kids pick on each other, and how these children might feel (both the victims and instigators of harassment).
>
> Don shared that when he was a child he had been teased about being fat, ugly, and uncoordianted.

He said he felt betrayed by one teacher who almost seemed to laugh with the other kids. He also said another teacher always tried to protect him, and while he liked her, it almost made it worse for him outside of school. Students were asked to take some of Don's comments and think about their implications for teachers. Students addressed the problem of intervention. How does one know when and in what way to intervene in a situation like this one? A number of suggestions were made, but specific rules were difficult. Dr. Young than asked the students how <u>they</u> felt around handicapped people. A number of students shared that they were uncomfortable around these individuals. Some said they didn't know how to "act." One student said, "Maybe kids are afriad of people with handicaps, and that's why they make jokes about them." Many responded to this idea. Eventually, it seemed that there were two problems that teachers needed to face. First, there was the problem of the child who is being teased. Teachers should relate to him/her with understanding (recognize the pain and difficulty of this situation) and in some way help the person respond both inner-personally (help the child feel okay about him/herself in spite of what other kids do), and interpersonally

> (stand up for him/herself to the harassment if possible.) Second, if done with sensitivity, the teacher should try to communicate with the "teasers" and help them become aware of the effects they were having on the child being teased and you, the teacher. These ideas were not seen as absolute answers, but as points to think about. Students were then asked to think about the implications this situation has on "all the labelling that goes on in education." (observation and summary of seminar 11/79)

The EEP did not have supervisors in the field placements working with students.[3] Instead, seminars were considered the place where students could learn from their field experiences, and many discussions focused on them. The "best" meetings and/or conferences, in the eyes of a few seminar leaders, occured when students would spontaneously raise specific educational problems, and the subsequent discussion would evolve to include the principles, implications, and issues that underlie the specific concern mentioned. Difficulties with particular children, curriculum, and/or school/classroom organization would lead into a discussion of: alienation, freedom, individual responsibility, the role of schooling in society, the purpose of education, etc.

> For example, in one seminar meeting a student complained about the busy-work that was required in some of her (university) courses. In addition

> to discussing her particular problem, I also wanted the students to think about how much busy-work is given to children in the public schools. I wanted them to think about why we give children busy-work, who does it benefit, and what are the effects on the classroom as a whole and the children's learning. (interview with Dr. Mentzer 2/80)

The seminar experience was not designed to produce a specific product i.e. students with a particular body of knowledge. Instead, it hopefully started and/or reinforced the process of student inquiry into the field of education. (interviews with Dr. Franks 9/79 and Dr. Mentzer 2/80)

As part of this process of inquiry, students were exposed to a commonly expressed slogan: "There is no one 'right'way to teach." Teaching/learning were seen as highly complex; involving interpersonal dynamics, subject content, social structures, and the personal development of the individuals. As a result, there were no obvious answers (techniques and/or methods) to the most essential aspects of the educational process. Problems were seen as best approached from a problem-solving, situational perspective, not an answer and/or "right" method approach. This slogan was used to instill an opposing attitude towards the standardization/behavioral philosophy within education. In courses and practicum sites students were often given specific procedures for teaching. To counter this, the slogan served a symbolic function in an attempt to develop an open attitude in the minds of students towards alternative ideas and approaches to teaching

and learning.

The themes of home base and growth were manifested in a variety of ways. The structure of the seminar, activities and discussions in meetings, individual conferences, and slogans all contributed to the actualization of these themes. However, this actualization was not the only reality to be found in the seminar experience.

The Seminar: Its Principles Interpreted

Both students and faculty generally accepted the themes of home base and growth that formed the basis of the seminar experience. There were only a few individuals who questioned the value of the principles outlined in the student handbook. Most seminar leaders expressed the belief that they were implementing the ideas mentioned above in their meetings and conferences. However, as individuals entered the "world" of the seminar, they interpreted these principles in light of their previous values, understandings, and experiences. The manifestation of these principles within the seminar meetings shifted in conjunction with these interpretations.

The seminar's language of "learning environment," "growth," "peer learning," "no-one-right-way-to-teach," and "reflection" tended to mystify, not clarify, the reality of this experience. While the language gave the impression of deep analysis, this depth of exploration was rare. Instead of being used as a vehicle for personal growth and reflection upon complex educational concerns, seminar discussions generally focused on management problems that addressed immediate classroom demands. For the most part, people shared techniques on

how to get and keep children's attention, keep them "on task," and how to effectively deal with discipline problems.

> Dr. Franks started the meeting by saying, "I want to discuss your field placements." Each student went around in order and gave their impressions of their situation. After everyone spoke briefly, the discussion focused on Helen's problem: whenever the directing teacher would leave the room, the kids would "go crazy." Dr. Franks called for a volunteer to role play being the teacher in this type of situation. Wendy did, and after a few minutes it was decided that this was a frustrating and overwhelming situation to be stuck in. The rest of the discussion then centered on what could a teacher do to get the kids "under control." A number of suggestions were offered: turning the lights on and off, asking the kids to put their heads down on their desks, threatening them with punishments (staying after school, being sent to the principal, etc.), using "I" messages, getting other kids to help get things quiet, et. At times Dr. Franks would share his opinion about some of the suggestions. Finally, he was asked what he would do. He said he would clamly but firmly go to individual children and tell them to sit still. If they had problems to be addressed, it would have to wait until the situation was calm.

> He didn't believe in threats or punishments, but said it was important to be firm in these situations. The students seemed very involved in this discussion and later spoke highly of it. (observation and summary of seminar 10/79)

In this discussion and others like it, there was no true assessment of the situation. The problem itself was taken for granted. No one questioned if this was really a crisis and if so, why. No one asked why the pupils might be acting this way, what the school and/or classroom was like (its history, atmosphere, and general structure), and why did this occur only when the directing teacher left the room. No one volunteered or was asked to explore the reasoning behind their suggestions, or to further explore their ideas. The goal was simply to find out what "worked" to solve the immediate problem at hand. The value of one technique versus another was often judged on this criteria alone.

The program's language gave the impression that seminars helped students develop their own educational values and purposes and thus avoid taking the everyday realities and belief systems found in the practicum sites for granted. However, the lack of penetration into the complexities of teaching, learning, and the school/classroom structure tended to gloss over any true analysis. "Discover-your-own-meaning," "being unique," and "no-one-right-way-to-teach" were generally interpreted through seminar discussions as simply: "Find the techniques that work for you." "Reflection" for most meant to think about which techniques seemed best in any given situation.

The techniques were seen as ends in themselves rather than as a means to implement some broader educational purpose. For example, many discussions focused on discipline problems. The emphasis was almost exclusively on getting feedback from seminar leaders and fellow students on those techniques that stopped and/or prevented "inappropriate" behavior. The question of social control versus freedom was never observed being discussed as an important, underlying issue.

A number of students and seminar leaders talked about the need for relevancy in seminar discussions. Apparently, by keeping the focus on immediate, technical, and utilitarian concerns of the field placements, they felt this need was being met. Students in the field were not judged on their ability to reflect upon the implications of their actions. To the contrary, they were judged specifically on how well they "managed" the immediate situations that confronted them. The demands of most elementary schools were clear: get the children through the "material" (curriculum) on time with as little disruption as possible. (see Goodman 1982) Students were hard pressed to meet this demand, and wanted to know specific techniques to help them in this endeavor. Seminar discussions that wandered too far from this central concern were viewed as irrelevant by many.[4] This charge was particularly sensitive within the EEP. One of the major educational principles of the program was that learning should be relevant to the learners, and seminars seemed to focus on the "needs" of students in an effort to model this principle. As a result, the purposes, belief systems, procedures, and structure of the school/

classroom were usually taken-for-granted and thus not considered during meetings. The goal of most discussions was limited to helping students successfully meet institutional demands, instead of questioning whether these demands were educationally and/or ethically sound.[5] Many students viewed the seminar as a place to ". . . help us teach," and discussions that made teaching more complex by raising substantive issues or problems were often discredited.

There seemed to be frequent opportunities to raise relevant, substantive issues, but the concern for giving everyone a chance to participate also made addressing these issues difficult. "Peer learning" was interpreted by many to mean that group sharing was a valuable goal in itself regardless of the praticular content of one's contribution. A number of seminar discussions had students share what they were doing in their practicums in more or less a show-and-tell atmosphere.

> Ms. Wagner started the meeting by asking students to share what they had brought to seminar. (They were to have brought in a self-made game or learning activity to today's meeting.) Only a few students brought anything. After showing their work, the discussion centered on the problem of motivating the children in their field placements to read i.e. finish their assigned work-book pages. One student shared that her teacher gave the kids a picture of either a smiling,

frowning, or neutral face to take home to their parents that reflected the child's work for that day. Another suggested that it was unreasonable to expect children to be "good" all morning long. "Being positive" and "warm" were also suggested. Robin then shared that in her reading group she let the kids get off the track by letting them tell personal stories as they read. At the end of the period she hadn't finished the story, and felt she had failed. The next time she was "a lot firmer" and didn't let the kids wander away from their reading. She finished the assigned story, the kids finished their workbook, and she felt much better. There was little continuity in this discussion. When one person finished speaking, another began without reference to any previous statements. After each person spoke Ms. Wagner concluded their comments by saying, "good," "super," "great," "wonderful," or "nice." (observation and summary of seminar 11/79)

Again, there was no questioning of feelings, assumptions, and/or definitions in this discussion. For example, the "need" for external motivation through rewards and punishments to "make kids learn" was taken for granted without ever mentioning the ethical or educational implications involved in such actions. In contrast, no one showed

any concern for the problems involved in stimulating or nurturing a child's intrinsic desire to learn. Definitions of "good" kids as quiet kids, workbook work as "reading," on task time as "learning," and getting through the material on time as the goal of teaching all went unexplored. Feelings of pressure and possible guilt if time schedules weren't kept also went unchallenged. The only real concern in this discussion was that everyone "shared."

In some seminars the emphasis was almost exclusively on developing a "home base," with little energy devoted to educational matters. Some students referred to their seminar as a "social club" or "sorority."

> Most of the time we just talk about what's happening in people's lives: who's getting married, what people will do when they graduate, . . . stuff like that: nothing really important. (interview with Margo 2/80)

At times, this concern for "good fellowship" inhibited direct discussion of conflicting points of view.

> Dr. Young then said, "We have about twenty minutes left. Does anyone have any management techniques that they've found to be successful?" A few students responded with some suggestions and then Bob asked with a great deal of frustration in his voice, "Isn't there any alternative to this reward/punishment syndrome that we always talk about?" His question took everyone by surprise,

> and there was tension in the air. After a minute (it seemed like ten), one student said, "When we were bad, we were either spanked or had to stay after school." Dr. Young replied, "I don't think punishments are very effective." Another student said, "I think if you're warm to kids they will want to please you and will do what you want." A few more suggestions were given and people started to feel more at ease. Bob's challenge, of course, was essentially ignored. (observation and summary of seminar 11/79)

Instead of developing a home base that allows for dissent and challenge, many limited their interpretation of this principle to the maintenance of "nice" feelings among the group members.

Most discussions seemed to lack the energy created when people struggle to understand themselves and/or situations in new and genuine ways. Instead of bringing out the students' developing ideas, feelings, and/or attitudes as points for reflection, many seminars seemed to limit the growth theme to the learning of specific "human relation" skills. While the rationale behind most exercises could be traced to the growth of people, these rationales were rarely discussed, disputed, understood, and/or agreed upon by the people in the seminar. Most of these activities seemed to be implemented outside of any real context. For example, the "centering" exercises mentioned earlier in this paper did not arise from a discussion on

the value of an individual learning about him/herself through silent contemplation nor the value of self knowledge in teaching. The "feedback" exercise did not come from an exploration into the value, problem, and purpose of communication between teachers and students. One session's activities simply included a "feedback" exercise. The focus was on "effective communication skills." Whether the techniques were to be used to help students gain better manipulative control over their future pupils or to help them respond to a troubled child was impossible to know from the activity itself. (observation and summary of seminar 11/79) While some of these "growth" exercises momentarily had students reflect upon themselves and those around them, the game-like quality of them, the skills emphasis, and the lack of context in which they were presented made their use seem far removed from the intrinsic growth of self-actualization theories.

Although many students struggled with feelings of fear, insecurity, and confusion as they tried to make sense out of the different and often conflicting ideas and realities presented to them in their university courses and practicum sites, these internal dilemmas, for the most part, remained absent from seminar discussions.

> This program is unsettling for a lot of people. You (students) are asked to evaluate yourself, and there is a lot of turmoil that can come from looking at yourself. What you find- you often don't like. I went through it, and became aware of insecurities that I have, but deep down I feel I'm

> doing a good job, so I got through it okay. Students come to me, perhaps because I'm older, and they complain about things. But mainly I see their insecurities, and no one seems very responsive to these feelings. It should happen in seminar, but it doesn't. (interview with Judy 11/79)

It is important to remember that having students genuinely grow through personal reflection and dialogue was very difficult. Most students were between 19 and 22 years old and had never been out of school. Throughout their past schooling experience they had been encouraged only to comply with educational demands; not to seriously reflect upon their ideas, values, and/or actions. Starting this process in one's junior year of college was a big departure from socialized norms.[6] There were times when thoughtful, challenging questions were asked in seminar meetings, and most students responded with silence.

Adding to this problem was the fact that some seminar leaders did not reduce their role as an authority figure, and students were very sensitive to the fact that their leader was also their primary evaluator. It was the seminar leader who wrote up their final evaluation and decided on their certification. Many students, after criticizing their seminar experience, asked that their comments be held in strict confidence for fear that somehow "word" would get back to their seminar leaders. A number of students felt they couldn't be honest in meetings and express their doubts, confusion,

and/or disagreements with the seminar leader for fear of creating a bad impression. It was simply safer to sit back, as they had always done in school, and not risk personal involvement.[7]

In summary, there seemed to be one set of principles that guided the seminar experience in the EEP, but two different realities. A few of the meetings manifested what seemed to be the genuine intent of the home base and growth themes. That is, within a supportive environment, students were asked to seriously reflect upon themselves, their education, and the education of children. However, in most meetings, these same principles were used to justify a rather shallow level of inquiry with a limited focus on technical, utilitarian concerns of the students' immediate student-teaching experiences and/or isolated human relation skills.

The Role of the University

Perhaps the first question that comes to mind is: did the seminar experience have an impact on the students' education? The vast majority of students said that their student-teaching was the most influential component of their professional education. According to most, they learned to teach ". . . in the classroom;" not in the university. Students generally tended to view seminar meetings as "just another (university) class," but because the topics of discussion often dealt directly with their field experience, these meetings had more legitimacy than most of their regular courses. The emphasis on field experience was particularly noticeable during their last quarter in the program. Many students tended to have,

what in high school might be called "senioritus." They had finished all their course work at the university, were student-teaching full time, but were still required to attend seminar. Since their time and energy were focused on the demands coming from their field placements, they seemed to mentally "drop out" of seminar.

Although seminars had a hard time competing with the practicum for student attention, they still seemed to have an influence on their education.

> When I was going through it (attending seminar meetings), I thought it was pretty much a waste of time. But now that I'm graduating, I can see that I got something out of it. (He was asked what.) Well, one thing is I think Dr. Franks got me to become a lot more aware of children as people than I was when I first started the program. Also, when I think back on it, I got a lot of good ideas about what to do in different situations, like discipline techniques. (interview with Tom 12/79)

The amount of influence on the seminar experience seemed to depend a great deal on the seminar leader. Individual conferences and advising had a big effect on the level of trust that developed between seminar leaders and their students. The more trust, the more students learned from their leader. In this sense, their interpersonal relationship was more important than any particular ideas being shared. As mentioned above, penetrating the students' inner thoughts

was difficult. Most students remained fairly guarded and only "opened up" to those seminar leaders who generally cared about and respected them as people. A number of students differentiated between their seminar leader and the meetings. While they criticized the latter, they felt they learned a lot from the former. Of course, this reaction varied greatly between individuals. While most of Dr. Franks' students experienced him as a caring person who had a "positive" effect upon them, a couple of his students saw him as being hypocritical: claiming the importance of personal relationships in teaching and learning, but not being very responsive to their personal needs. In each case, however, the essential factor in determining the level of influence was found in the interpersonal dynamics between individuals more than the congruence or incongruence of educational philosophies, ideas, or values.

Assuming that seminars do have an impact on the students' education, what is the nature of this influence? What is the function of the university in pre-service teacher education? Most studies in this area usually juxtapose the university against the field experience and focus on attitude shifts within students. (see Zeichner and Tabachnick 1981) The majority of these studies suggest that the university has a liberalizing influence upon students, but it is usually undermined by the conservative forces in the practicum sites (see Hoy 1967, 1968, 1969; Hoy and Rees 1977; Anderson 1974; Jacobs 1968; Copeland 1980; Iannaccone 1963). On one level, this study would support this claim. Most classrooms in which students were

placed did reflect very conservative attitudes and practices towards education. (see Goodman 1982) Relatively speaking, the seminar experience presented a more liberal view to students. For example, in a number of discussions on discipline, seminar leaders often discouraged the use of corporal punishments or other threatening behavior that existed in the public schools.[8] Students were encouraged to be positive instead of negative, sensitive instead of callous, warm instead of distant, and flexible instead of rigid in their teaching of children. While most students seemed attracted to these ideas, a number of them said, as they became more involved in their student-teaching, that they ". . . just weren't practical."

This picture of the university's liberal role, however, has been challenged in recent years (see Greene 1978, Bartholomew 1976, Zeichner 1980, Giroux 1980). A number of individuals suggest that contrary to the above portrayal, the university plays a collaborative role <u>with</u> the public schools' conservative perspective. It has been argued that when one looks at the basic messages echoed in the university, the emphasis is clearly on helping students "fit into" their practicum sites with as little friction as possible (see Tabachnick et. al. 1979, Bowden 1972). On a subtle but powerful level, the findings of this study support this notion.

Most seminar discussions helped students decide what techniques worked best in the management of their classrooms i.e. organizing the day's activities, controlling discipline problems, and keeping the children "on task." Rarely were techniques discussed in light of

other considerations, such as: what would be the most conducive for creativity, what would be the most ethical behavior, what would stimulate an intrinsic desire to learn, etc. Substantive questioning of the field experience, itself, was almost non-existant. The curriculum (what's worth teaching and learning), the nature and purpose of instruction, the interpersonal relationships, power structure of the schools/classrooms, and the role of school in society were for the most part taken for granted. By focusing on "how" things were to be done in classrooms and ignoring "why" things were as they appeared, seminars tended to legitimate an acceptance of and conformity to the existing, conservative practices and beliefs found in the field placements.

It would be inaccurate, however, if the analysis ended with this conclusion. There were definite exceptions to this general pattern. Students often complained about many aspects of their field placements and at times they would question the value of what was going on. This questioning was frequently vague, and many students seemed unsure of exactly what "it" was that was wrong. Nevertheless, these complaints occasionally, became the catalyst for substantive discussions in meetings and/or conferences. There were also moments when seminar leaders or students would raise non-utilitarian issues that required serious thought. These reflective instances seemed to occur only under certain conditions:

1) The seminar leader had to accept the importance of raising these underlying questions. Seminar leaders clearly

led their groups. Students would tend to pick up on their leader's "agenda." If the seminar leader had a utilitarian perspective of teaching, it was very unusual for even the most thoughtful student to raise more subtle issues for consideration.

2) Of those seminar leaders who did see the value of raising these issues, they also had to have genuine concern for their students. Asking students to question their attitudes, values, behavior, etc. requires real sensitivity. It is difficult for anyone to seriously look at the assumptions and implications of their actions and beliefs. If done without care, the result is most likely defensiveness; not insight.

3) A real attempt to link these issues to practical concerns was necessary. Concern for "what works" has some legitimacy. No one would purposefully teach for long if the results were unproductive, even if they were "ethical." While the definition of "what works" could be a topic of discussion, its importance could not be overlooked.

4) Finally, students had to be willing to consider these issues when and if raised. In the end, it is up to the individual student. S/he could appear to be deep in thought during a discussion of some important, complex educational problem, but the focus of that thought could be on dinner; not children. No one can force an individual to think.

When these conditions were manifested, the effects were potentially impressive.

> I remember one discussion about a year ago that really made me think about what it means to be a child in school all day. I don't remember the specifics, but it had something to do with comparing the working conditions of the children with those of adults. We actually, in many ways, make children do things that no one would expect adults to do in their jobs. Most adults get to talk to each other when they work, but not kids. Most adults also don't like being told exactly what to do, where to go, how to think, or what to think every minute of the day, but this is exactly what we expect from kids in school. (interview with Alice 2/80)

It would be unrealistic to expect substantive discussions at each meeting and/or conference. Anything done too much can lose its significance. This situation was clearly not a problem in the EEP. However, as Zeichner (1981a) points out, while not being a panacea for the major educational problems facing this country's schools, seminar experiences do offer the potential for helping students think more deeply about schools, education, children, and their role as teachers, and that this reflection can help develop better teachers (see Wehlage 1978, Elliott 1976).

Therefore, the seminar experience performed a mixed function in the education of these students. At different times it played a

"liberal" role, a "collaborative and conservative" role, and a "reflective" role. A great deal depended upon the individual seminar leader and student(s).[9]

One conclusion seems obvious. Having a seminar component within a particular program does not necessarily mean that reflective thought will result, even when this is a stated goal of the program. While students and faculty of the EEP generally accepted the goals and principles of the seminar experience, they interpreted these ideals in light of their values, understandings, and experiences resulting in a varied reality. The terminology remained ambiguous enough for individuals to feel comfortable with their own interpretations. Seminar leaders and/or students never met to discuss differing conceptualizations of this experience.[10] This is not to suggest that the problem then becomes one of getting people to accept and act upon the "true" intent of a given philosophy. No matter how noble a set of principles may sound, if it is rigidly interpreted and forced upon people, it becomes dogma. Nevertheless continual dialogue between faculty members and their students would appear to be a crucial component in any effective seminar experience. Principles should not be taken for granted, but should be re-examined and clarified in an on-going manner.

Another conclusion worth noting is that in our efforts to understand this process of learning to teach, educators must go beyond the world of ideas and explore the empirical reality of this education as it unfolds over time. In addition to student-teaching, seminars,

supervision of student-teachers, and university courses need to be investigated if we are to develop a comprehensive picture of this educational process. Is the EEP unique in its approach to teacher education? In what way is the reality of the EEP similar or different to other programs in the United States, Canada, and Europe? What function(s) should the university play in the education of teachers? Should it help students fit into the existing instructional patterns and belief systems found in the practicum sites, or should it challenge this reality and promote reflection upon fundamental, substantive questions of education, ethics, and/or social structures of schooling? Are these two objectives compatible, or does an emphasis on one tend to negate the other? During this century a number of approaches to teacher education have been developed. The dominate paradigm has reflected a behavioral/utilitarian orientation which is now being called Competency/Performance Based Teacher Education in this country (see Elam 1971, Rosner 1972). While this paradigm still dominates, there have been alternatives developed and in some cases implemented (see Crook 1974, Elliott 1976, Silberman 1971, Nash and Ducharme 1976, Ellner and Barnes 1977, Zeichner 1981a, Wass et. al. 1974, Feiman 1979). Each perspective, of course, implies a certain function(s) for the university to play in the education of teachers. However, other than a basic philosophy and general structure little is known about the dominant approach or these alternatives. We need to know what actually happens in these programs. Developing quality teacher education requires more than just a conceptual framework. It is equally important to see how ideals are concretely manifested.

Notes

[1]For a more comprehensive discussion of the theory and design of this study's methodology see Goodman (1982).

[2]Most faculty considered the job of seminar leader to be very difficult because it demanded personal involvement and time (see Appendix A). Dr. Bankman, a professor in the Foundations of Education Department and one of the founders of the EEP said:

> You simply can't run a program that was envisioned by the founders on the same amount of money that you can run a block program. I used to be a seminar leader and it was very demanding. At first people gave out of their "hide" because we wanted to make it work, but eventually most of us got burnt out and left. There just wasn't enough support (from the university) to make the effort worth it. . . . If seminar leaders do what they are suppose to do, it is very taxing. It is much easier to teach a class in the traditional way where you basically lecture and make assignments then to get to know students personally, and serve as their counselor, academic advisor, and evaluator. Traditionally, the university has not attracted people who have the skills and sensitivity that are required to be a really effective seminar leader. This added to our difficulties since we had little history to build

on, and hence, no historical recognition.

(interview with Dr. Bankman 12/79)

The department was in the process of re-evaluating the seminar leader's job description. Because of the work load, a number of faculty were reluctant to take on the responsibility. Seminar officially counted as 1/3 of a professor's teaching load, but if done well would easily take of half their time.

[3]Seminar leaders did serve as a laison to the public schools. Each leader was assigned two schools, and s/he would make at least one visit to those schools each quarter. While there, they would "check in" with the principal and directing teachers to see if there were any problems with the students. If there were, the laison would then contact that students' seminar leader for further investigation. Seminar leaders did observe each of their Intensive students once, but most felt this was merely a "token observation," and didn't resemble supervision. Students that were having substantial difficulty did receive extra supervision from their seminar leader, but only in severe cases.

[4]Cohn (1979) also found this phenomenon, and referred to students' inability to see beyond their own immediate, practical concerns as "situational thinking." Fuller and her associates (see Fuller 1969, Fuller and Bown 1975) view this preoccupation with immediate concerns as reflective of an "immature" stage of teacher development.

[5]Accepting the view that the problem of teaching is to discover and implement institutional demands is discussed by Katz (1974). In this paper she describes the condition of students accepting their practicum experiences as the "upper or outer limits of what is possible in classroom practice," and refers to this situation as "excessive realism." A discussion of the ethical implications of "meeting the needs of students" is discussed in Zeichner (1981b).

[6]One theory suggests that people learn to teach as children by watching the work of their public school teachers e.g. "apprenticeship of observation" (see Pruitt and Lee 1978, Lortie 1975, Maddox 1968, Petty and Hogben 1980). Sarason (1977) suggests that teachers rarely show their own thinking processes to children. Therefore, children don't see their teachers as thoughtful individuals. These points, coupled with the fact that children are rarely asked to think in schools, may explain why so few students equate teaching with thoughtfulness.

[7]As Zeichner (1981a) says, ". . . there is a fundamental contradiction in attempting to provide an emancipatory learning experience through the use of conventional 'top-down' pedagogical methods. The effects of this contradiction will be to perpetuate an environment in which students have little opportunity to think or question." The findings of this study would support this claim.

[8]The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare conducted a survey of disciplinary actions taken against school children in the 1975-76 school year. The EEP is located in one of five states which

used corporal punishment as a formal disciplinary action on more than ten percent of the study body. (see appendix C)

[9]Zeichner and Tabachnick (1982) also discovered that an important factor in the supervision of student teachers was the way in which individual supervisors interpreted the term, "clincial supervision." Under this broad heading, they found some supervisors who focused on technical concerns of students and demands from the classroom, and others who focused on ethical and critical issues and implications of classroom realities.

[10]Dr. Franks said that during the early years of the EEP, seminar leaders did meet to share ideas and discuss different conceptualizations of the seminar experience. However, as the program got bigger and "more institutionalized" these discussions were gradually discontinued. (interview with Dr. Franks 1/80)

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Appendix A

Role of the EEP Seminar Leader

The following taken from the "Plan for Departmental Individual Work and Merit Evaluation," as approved by the Elementary Teacher Education Faculty, May 5, 1977.

Seminar Leader

A. Advising and Counselling Roles (for each student):
   1. Academic advising and personal counselling
   2. Orienting each new student to the seminar
   3. Planning long range program
   4. Maintaining personal program folder
   5. Determining available field placements for each quarter; reviewing applications and recommending suitable placements
   6. Transmitting placement requests to Team Leader; reviewing and evaluating progress at the end of each quarter and prior to intensive and graduation.
   7. Conducting midpoint and final reviews
   8. Writing letters of recommendations at completion of the program
   9. Serving as ombudsman

A. Other Roles:
   1. Conducting weekly seminar meetings
   2. Attending team, committee and other pertinent meetings as they occur
   3. Maintaining liaison with substantive panel with regard to all seminar students
   4. Communicating with principals and teachers on a regular basis - EEP in a cluster school
   5. Communicating with the College of Education Student Service Center when necessary for the prupose of maintaining official records required of all students
   6. Visit intensive students
   7. Evaluating each student's work each quarter and assigning grades i.e. pass/fail/incomplete

Appendix B

Recommended Seminar Activities

Quartet encounters

Four students (or five) form a small group and reveal to each other their feelings about a number of questions which are asked by the seminar leader. For example:

1. What is your earlient memory of school as a child?
2. What is the worst thing that ever happened to you in school?
3. Describe your favorite teacher in elementary school.
4. Describe your favorite teacher in high school.
5. How have you changed since coming to college?
6. What has been the happiest day of your life?
7. What has been the saddest day in your life?
8. What do you hope to be doing five years from today?
9. If you could change elementary schools in one important way what would it be?
10. Other than your parents what person has had the most profound influence on your thoughts and values?

Ask students to bring to seminar one such question, and add them to your list. For more information see Munter - Encounter in the Classroom.

Fantasy trip

This activity is one students can use with children in their own teaching. It is described more fully in Wittmer & Myrick - Facilitative Teaching. Generally, it consists of a series of instructions (with soft music in the background) to close one's eyes, relax, imagine taking a trip to quiet, pastoral scenes, or within one's own body, and return. An important part of this activity is "processing" the experience, or discussing the feelings members of the group had during the trip.

Public Interview

This is one of the valuing exercises that has proven valuable in seminar. The seminar leader develops a list of questions on a broad range of values, (see Raths - Values and Teaching for details) and a volunteer is asked the questions with the understanding that --

1. He can "pass" on any question (refuse to answer.)
2. Any question the seminar leader asks the student can be asked back of the seminar leader - and he must respond!

Appendix B (continued)

3. The questioning will end immediately if the student wants it to end.

Some sample questions are the following:

1. Do you think it is okay for teachers to take time off for a mental health day occasionally?
2. Are you in favor of women's liberation?
3. Should children be allowed to discuss sex?
4. If you had a choice between three jobs after graduation what would be your main consideration in choosing one?
5. Has religion played a very big role in your life?
6. Should teachers have the right to go out on strike?
7. Have you ever worked to help a political candidate get elected?
8. Do you plan to have children? How many?
9. What should our government do to decrease unemployment?
10. What do you find most irritating about the people you live with?

Interview two students with different questions then encourage the entire group to interview the seminar leader. After the interviews are finished, discuss them and point out some purposes behind the public interview.

1. It helps members of the seminar to develop their values.
2. It promotes openness among all members of seminar, including leader.
3. It helps members to understand each other better and see "where others are coming from."
4. It is usually an exhilarating experience for the person being interviewed and he or she goes away feeling better about self.
5. This activity is one teachers can use with children in elementary schools.

Appendix C

Where Paddles Swing

The Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, conducted a survey of disciplinary actions taken against school children in the 1975-76 school year. The figures that resulted are carefully labelled estimates and the warning is added that although this is the most reliable data obtainable, they must be interpreted with caution for several reasons:

1. Form 101 asking for enrollment, ethnicity, special education and other facts was sent to all 15,715 school districts, but form 102 which included the question on corporal punishment was sent to a sample 3,617 (43,738 individual schools).

2. The question asked was: The number of pupils who received corporal punishment administered by a principal or his designes as a formal disciplinary measure. Thus all physical punishments by teachers in classrooms or halls, by coaches on the field, by bus drivers, aides and other persons were not counted.

3. Many districts, according to the introduction to the report, submitted incomplete, inaccurate, or inconsistent data. Of all the disciplinary questions (suspensions, explusions, transfers etc.) item 17g, corporal punishment, had the highest non-response rate.

The figures here are those reported by each state extrapolated to represent the whole school population of the 1975-76 school year and expressed as a percentage of the total enrollment for the school year 1976-77.

It is obvious that the actual number of incidents of corporal punishment was much higher than this. Some school administrators consider paddling (licks, swats, hacks, pops, or other local euphemisms) to be a trival necessity, not worthy of federal attention. Some have the grace to be embarrassed by the numbers while others boast of their scores as an indication of toughness, believing it to be a virtue others are afraid to match. These varying attitudes necessarily influence estimates. Sometimes the chore is delegated to a harrassed secretary only peripherally aware of the facts.

Regional differences, however, are probably valid. They match information gathered from newspaper editorials regarding the Supreme Court decision of 1977, from reports of the deliberations and decisions of local school boards, and from court cases entered by angry parents against schoolmen who have committed atrocities in serious misuse of their authority and have permanently injured children.